

ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION: ISLA 200, Fall 2016\*



Image: a diagram for a water-powered elephant clock in Ibn al-Razāz al-Jazarī's (1206 C.E.) *The Book of Knowledge of Ingenious Mechanical Devices*.

**Location:** Lectures: Rutherford Physics Building Room 118; Conferences: LEA 110, Arts 260 and Arts W-20.

**Times:** 2:35-3:55 PM Wednesdays and Fridays

**Professor:** Ahmed Fekry Ibrahim

McGill University, Institute of Islamic Studies

**Office hours:** Wednesdays and Fridays 4-5 or by appointment (Office 310, Morrice Hall)

**Important:** Please register for conferences before **September 20** because registration will not be possible after that date without a fee.

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\*This syllabus is based on Professor Prashant Keshavmurthy's syllabus with his permission.

**Texts for the course:** If you do not already possess copies of the following texts you must purchase them from McGill Bookstore: 1. Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2009). 2. Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405* (Pearson Prentice Hall, 2004). 3. Andrew Rippin, Norman Calder, Jawid Mojaddedi, eds., *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature* (Routledge, 2003). The rest of the texts will be made available to you as PDFs on myCourses.

**Course aims and methods:** This course aims to introduce you to the overarching questions that contemporary humanities scholarship on the pre-nineteenth century Islamic world has posed and broad answers to them while reflecting on why these questions have been salient. These questions include: What are the impediments to understanding pre-19<sup>th</sup> century Islamic civilization today? In what civilizational context did Islam emerge? As the youngest of the Abrahamic faiths, what did Islam and its politico-theological traditions inherit from the older faith traditions? What do we know about the Prophet Muhammad's life, the central figure of the Islamic faith? What kind of text is the Qur'ān? What kind of governments were Islamic empires? What is the historical circumstances that led to the Sunni Shi'i split in the formative years of Islam? What is the Shari'a or Islamic law? What is the legacy of Turkic peoples in the formation of Islamic civilization? What are the philosophical, artistic, and literary traditions of Islamic societies before Europe and America came to dominate them?

This course aims to pose these questions and discuss them in a manner that matches the global scope and over a millennium of Islamic civilization before European colonization, using texts specifically written for undergraduate survey classes. Accordingly, the course will unfold under thematic headings but also in a chronological manner leading you from the Late Ancient setting in which Islam first emerged as a faith, social organization, and political vision in the seventh century of the Common Era to the early modern empires of the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries that then came to be dominated by European colonial powers.

The classes will roughly alternate between lectures that will go over and supplement the assigned readings and conferences with the teaching assistants and the instructor in which you will have the opportunity to state your responses to the assigned tasks based on the readings for that week and pose questions about them and about the lectures. The conferences will welcome your active participation.

**Course rules:** The aforementioned aims and methods assume that the course will be effective on the condition that you come to class and conferences *having read* the prescribed texts. Without doing the readings, the course will certainly not be as effective as we all hope.

In addition to reading the assigned texts, you must come to the conferences having thought of answers or responses to the questions posed in the syllabus as "Tasks". These tasks are a way to help you think on your feet, as it were, when you find yourself confronted with such questions and assertions in everyday life.

Finally, please also use the tutorials to seek any clarifications you may want regarding the contents of the readings and the preceding Monday's lecture.

**Method of evaluation:** **A) Quizzes:** There will be three quizzes on key terms that you will have encountered in the readings. You will be expected to choose 8 key terms (or names of historical figures) from a list of 10 and write one or two sentences identifying each one of them. Each quiz will represent 10% of your final grade. **B) The mid-term exam: Part 1** of the mid-term exam

will require you to choose 7 out of a list of 10 concepts, names or terms drawn from the reading assignments of the preceding weeks and write approximately a paragraph long identification, based on the relevant reading assignments, for each. This will account for **15%** of your final grade. **Part 2** of the mid-term exam will require you to choose 3 out of a list of 6 essay questions and write approximately a page-long answer to each based on the reading assignments. All the questions will assume only your knowledge of your reading assignments. This will account for **15%** of your final grade. **C) Reflection paper (800-1000 words):** you will be required to write a reflection paper summarizing one theme of the course that you are free to choose, and discussing your own views on the core issues related to this theme. This will account for **20%** of your final grade. **D) Attendance 10%:** Attendance will be measured as follows: if absent 3 times or fewer, you will receive the full 10% for attendance. If absent 4-6 times, you will receive only 5% and none if absent more than 6 times. **E) Meaningful verbal participation in conferences 10%.**

(Do you think the grading system is fair and balanced?)

## **SCHEDULE**

### **I: FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION**

#### **Week 1:**

**(Sept. 7):** Introduction of course content, aims, methods and rules: Discussion of Islamophobia, religious beliefs, and academic distance from the subject matter.

**(Sept. 9):** Edward Said, “The Clash of Ignorance” at <http://www.thenation.com/article/clash-ignorance/>

Richard M. Eaton, “Islamic History as Global History”; Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Islam in Global Perspective”, 3 – 18.

### **II. LATE ANTIQUITY**

#### **Week 2:**

**(Sept. 14):** Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Arabia”, 19 – 32 and “The Pre-Islamic Near East”, 33 – 48.

**(Sept. 16): (Task:** come with the name of a thing, idea or practice whose origins or diffusion through the world or both are Islamic).

### **III. A PROPHET AND THE RISE OF ISLAM**

#### **Week 3:**

**(Sept. 21):** Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “The Rise of Islam”, 20 – 31

Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “The Life of Muhammad”, 49 – 68.

**(Sept. 23):** Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you would answer the question: “What did Muhammad owe his religious environment?”)

#### **IV. THE QUR’ĀN, MUHAMMAD AND HIS TRADITIONS**

##### **Week 4:**

**(Sept. 28):** Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “The Qur’ān”, 69 – 87, “The Tradition Literature”, 88 – 101

Calder, Mojaddedi, Rippin eds. *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, “The Qur’ān”, “The Life of Muhammad”.

Recommended: Jonathan AC Brown, “What are hadith?” at

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq\\_I8QIDLjQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wq_I8QIDLjQ)

**(Sept. 30): (QUIZ 1)**

#### **V. ARAB IMPERIALISM**

##### **Week 5:**

**(Oct. 5):** Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “Arab Imperialism”, 33 – 61

Patricia Crone, “Jihad: Idea and History”.

**(Oct. 7):** Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you would respond to the statement: “21<sup>st</sup> century Islamic militants are continuing the tradition of medieval jihad”.

#### **VI. THE DEVELOPMENT OF SECTARIANISM**

##### **Week 6:**

**(Oct. 12):** Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “The Development of Sectarianism”, 62 – 84.

**(Oct. 14):** Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “The Center Cannot Hold: Three Caliphates”, 85 – 112.

##### **Week 7:**

**(Oct. 19): (QUIZ 2)**

**(Oct. 21):** we will watch a documentary about sectarianism in Iraq in class:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CARqFBWopRM>

## VII. ISLAMIC LEGAL CULTURE

### Week 8:

**(Oct. 26):** Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “Synthesis and Creativity”, 114 – 138

Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Islamic Law”, 149 – 170.

**(Oct. 28):** Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of how you might answer the questions: “Was pre-nineteenth century Islamic legal culture pluralistic and flexible in the legal options it offered? What were the limits of such pluralism and flexibility? And what were the minimum necessary conditions for such pluralism and flexibility?”)

### Week 9:

**(Nov. 2): MIDTERM EXAM 1**

**(Nov. 4): MIDTERM EXAM 2**

## VIII. SUFISM

### Week 10:

**(Nov. 9):** Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Sufism”, 193 – 216.

Calder, Mojaddedi, Ripplin eds. *Classical Islam: A Sourcebook of Religious Literature*, “Sufism”, 228 – 236, 243 – 261.

Watch: 1. Video 6 at <http://www.sarangi.net/growing-into-music-films-on-hindustani-music-rajasthani-music-and-qawwali> (AT HOME)

2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0TH7OgHjJ0w> (IN CLASS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cusyAUWoUQk> (IN CLASS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPZxrHchfCA> (IN CLASS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtPu-EAJf6s> (IN CLASS)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qbNhiDXY-Mk> (IN CLASS), American Shaykh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3dfwcTK9neE> (IN CLASS)

**(Nov. 11):** Conferences (**Task:** come with at least two distinct one-sentence definitions of the term “Sufism”). Reflect on the question of whether Sufism is part of the Islamic tradition or contrary to its core normative beliefs.

## IX. FILLING THE VACUUM OF POWER, 950 – 1100

**Week 11: (Nov. 16): (REFLECTION PAPER DUE TODAY)** Vernon O. Egger, *A History of the Muslim World to 1405*, “Filling the Vacuum of Power, 950 – 1100”, 142 – 170.

**(Nov. 18):** Conferences (**Task:** come having thought of answers to the question: “Why would the most famous epic of Persian literature to be patronized by Muslim dynasties commemorate the kings of pre-Islamic Iran?”)

## **X. PHILOSOPHY**

**Week 12:**

**(Nov. 23):** Robert Wisnovsky, “Philosophy and Theology: Islam”, 698 – 706.

Majid Fakhry, “Philosophy and Theology: From the 8<sup>th</sup> Century C.E. to the Present” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 269 – 303.

**(Nov. 25): (QUIZ 3)**

## **XI. THE OTTOMAN, SAFAVID AND MUGHAL EMPIRES**

**Week 13:**

**(Nov. 30):** Daniel W. Brown, *A New Introduction to Islam*, “Revival and Reform”, 234 – 247

Ira M. Lapidus, “Sultanates and Gunpowder Empires” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 347 – 393.

*Think about the features that the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal Empires shared.*

## **(Dec. 2): XII. ART AND ARCHITECTURE**

Sheila S. Blair and Jonathan M. Bloom, “Art and Architecture: Themes and Variations” in John L. Esposito, ed., *The Oxford History of Islam* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 215 – 267.

***McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore, all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/) for more information) (approved by Senate on 29 January 2003)***

*L'université McGill attache une haute importance à l'honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site [www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/](http://www.mcgill.ca/students/srr/honest/)).*

***“In accord with McGill University’s Charter of Students’ Rights, students in this course have the right to submit in English or in French any written work that is to be graded.” (approved by Senate on 21 January 2009 - see also the section in this document on Assignments and***

*evaluation.)*

*“Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).”*